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ERS NEWSLETTER

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A Bimonthly Newsletter for Economic Research Service Employees and Colleagues

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, DC

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ERS Briefs Congressional Staff

At the request of Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee, ERS staff recently briefed about 40 congressional staff members on *Rural Economic Development in the 1980's*, a 17-chapter compendium of research on rural development written by a number of ERS analysts and other authors.

John Lee and Kenneth Deavers made introductory remarks to the audience of staff members from the Agriculture Committees in both houses and from several other committees that sometimes consider rural development matters. Richard

Long reviewed general rural conditions and the sectoral makeup of the rural economy. David McGranahan compared employment opportunities in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas within the same industries, explaining that professional and managerial jobs are disproportionately found in the cities. McGranahan also noted that the pervasive metropolitan wage premium grows with the level of education required by the job. Norman Reid discussed the implications of the report's findings on rural conditions and economic development and outlined some of the logical components of strategies for rural development.

ERS Staff Participate in SAAS

At a meeting of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists in Nashville, Tenn., February 5-8, ERS staff participated as follows:

Paper authors: Kenneth Algozin, Kenneth Baum, Douglas Brooks, Nathan Childs, Bradley Crowder, Steven Crutchfield, Elizabeth Dagata, Michael Dicks, Ron Durst, David Ervin, Walter Ferguson, Deano Hagerman, Stephen Haley, Joy Harwood, Bengt Hyberg, Linwood Hoffman, Ben Huang, Frederick Kuchler, Bruce Larson, Gene Mathia, Stephanie Mercier (2), Michael Price, Peggy Ross, Clifford Rossi, Mark Smith, and Edwin Young.

Session organizers: William Lin and Kenneth Nelson.

Session moderators: Harry Baumes, Lee Christensen, Gene Mathia, and William Lin.

Session discussants: Kenneth Deavers, John Dunmore, and Lester Myers.

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ERS and Farm Foundation to Cosponsor Regional Agricultural Outlook Seminar

An ERS regional agricultural situation and outlook seminar is planned for April 12 in

Memphis, Tenn. This is one in a continuing series of conferences, sponsored by ERS and the Farm Foundation, to expand the use of outlook material by the agribusiness community.

The conference will stress regional commodity developments and also offer insights about future commodity

policy direction. ERS analysts will present the outlook for aggregate farm indicators as well as for major commodities. Analysts from the business community and universities will be included on the program to add a wider range of viewpoints to the discussion of emerging events.

Current Research

How Much Did the Drought Hurt Rural Communities and Businesses?

As required by the Disaster Assistance Act of 1988, a team of ERS analysts coordinated by Thomas Carlin (786-1527) has produced *The Drought of 1988: Effects on the U.S. Food and Fiber Sector and on Rural Communities* (AGES89-8, Jan. 1989). [See "U.S. Congress Requests Rural Business and Enterprise Study," *ERS Newsletter*, Vol. 6, No. 5, Oct./Nov. 1988, p. 4.]

The report estimates that, without drought relief, 20,000-30,000 of the 550,000 U.S. commercial farms (those with annual sales of \$40,000 or more), located primarily in the Northern Plains and Corn Belt—Lake States, would have experienced losses posing a serious threat to longrun survival. Federal drought assistance would likely reduce the core problem group to 10,000-15,000 farms.

Farmers in the drought areas who had large crop inventories or good harvests through irrigation benefited from higher prices. Sales from inventories probably raised the farm sector's net cash income for 1988 close to the record 1987 level. Ironically, the reduction of burdensome stockpiles and strengthened commodity prices left the farm sector in a stronger financial position following the drought.

Except for a few firms in the hardest hit areas of the Midwest, the drought had little effect on agricultural input industries, since farmers had already purchased most supplies before the drought became severe and widespread. Some vegetable processors, principally in the Lake States, temporarily closed plants, but most other

processors obtained adequate supplies from inventories on hand. Rural banks in the drought areas entered 1988 in a stronger financial position than rural banks elsewhere, so most of these lenders should be able to handle problem loans and meet local credit demand in 1989. Impaired navigation on the Mississippi River disrupted grain shipments in the spring and early summer, but demand for barge shipping declined by midsummer as export volume shrank and producers held stocks in anticipation of higher prices.

The drought's effect on the U.S. economy will be relatively small, but some rural communities' business activities were substantially reduced. The final impact in an area depends on the severity of the drought, the importance of farming to the area's economy, the diversity of the area's farming, and the distribution of Federal drought assistance.

Direct losses in gross income and drops in rural business activity due to drought ranged from around 20 percent in sparsely populated north-central North Dakota to around 1 percent in more industrialized northwest Ohio. Federal drought assistance will reduce farming's direct losses between 20 percent in Ohio and Wisconsin and 45 percent in Montana.

Effects of Changing Grain Grading Standards

ERS researchers are evaluating the economic impacts of changes in U.S. grain standards and grain grading and inspection procedures being considered by USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS). ERS analysts William Lin (786-1840), Keith Menzie, Bruce Wendland, and Edwin Young studied the impact of changes in the shiplot inspection plan used by FGIS inspectors during

loading of ships at U.S. ports. The study revealed that the proposal would likely cost wheat, corn, and soybean exporters \$15 million to \$18 million under fiscal year 1987 conditions. The actual cost would depend on the option (additional cleaning vs. blending with better quality grain) used by the exporters to meet the higher quality requirements under the revised shiplot inspection plan.

ERS analysts Stephanie Mercier (786-1840) and Edwin Young are working on another study for FGIS to evaluate the economic consequences of combining dockage and foreign material into a single grading factor in the grading standards for wheat. The study will evaluate the merits of continuing to measure the factors separately as well as combining them into a single grading factor.

Also, ERS analysts Linwood Hoffman (786-1840) and Mark Ash are studying U.S. grading standards for sorghum. FGIS is considering separating the factor for broken kernels and foreign material into two factors. The study will evaluate several options concerning the treatment of dockage and foreign material.

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Editors:

Verta Rape and Lindsay Mann

Layout and Design:

Carolyn Riley

Publication Assistant:

Patricia Beavers

Division Representatives:

Byron Bernison,

Arthur Dommen, Lawrence Glaser,

Charles Hallahan, and

Christopher McGath

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Administrator's Letter — A Birthday ... and a Reading Assignment

The Economic Research Service was created on April 3, 1961, by Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman. In establishing ERS and another new agency, the Statistical Reporting Service, both under a Director of Agricultural Economics, Secretary Freeman said:



"They will put renewed vigor into providing better information to U.S. farmers, ranchers, and consumers and to foreign countries on agricultural needs both in the United States and abroad."

Secretary Freeman envisioned the new agency developing a "food budget" that would provide U.S. and global food and fiber supply and demand estimates. These would be used to guide USDA's programs for farm production, supplemental distribution to the needy, and foreign food aid.

Nathan Koffsky, a career civil servant, was chosen to head the new Economic Research Service. Koffsky, a veteran of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE), was well known for his work on farm income. His appointment established the continuing precedent of ERS's leaders being career professionals.

The new ERS included work that had been assigned to the Agricultural Marketing Service, Agricultural Research Service, and Foreign Agricultural Service after the demise of the BAE in October 1953. These activities were organized in ERS under a deputy administrator for agricultural economics and a deputy administrator for foreign agriculture.

Since 1961, ERS has been through numerous reorganizations and even, in the late 1970's, a couple of name changes. But we have never strayed from Freeman's charge of putting "renewed vigor" into providing economic and social science analysis and information to those clients who shape the performance of agricultural and rural economies and to those whose well-being is affected by that performance. Doing that job well today is no less challenging than it was during the turbulent days of the BAE.

As we celebrate ERS's 28th birthday, our primary focus is our future. We will be discussing that future and the opportunities it holds for us at the annual ERS Planning Conference in late April. I also hope to structure more opportunities for broader staff participation in that dialogue over the coming months and year.

At the same time, we can learn lessons from studying our roots. The history of the evolution of economic and social science research in USDA is fascinating reading. Perhaps we can establish an ongoing course or seminar series on "ERS's Roots." In statistics, one cannot establish a trend with one observation. Likewise, in ERS, we can better understand where we are and where we might be going if we know more about how we got here.

A good place to begin understanding our history is the article "Economic Research in the Department of Agriculture: A Historical Perspective" by Gladys Baker and Wayne Rasmussen, in *Agricultural Economics Research* (now *JAER*), Vol. 27, Nos. 3 and 4, July-October 1975. In future issues of the *Newsletter*, additional historical references will be suggested. Perhaps ERS staff and alumni may wish to volunteer some short anecdotes from our history that we can publish.


John Lee

Soybean Marketing Loans Study Completed

ERS economists Bradley Crowder (786-1840) and Joseph Glauber recently completed a study on marketing loans for the 1989 soybean crop, as mandated by the Disaster Assistance Act of 1988. Because of the 1988 drought and short world oilseed supplies, prices have been relatively high for the 1988 soybean crop. Prices are expected to remain above the U.S. loan rate during the 1989/90 marketing year (Sept. 1-Aug. 31), making a marketing loan ineffective if implemented for the 1989 soybean crop.

The study results also show that stronger production incentives are needed to encourage commodity program participants to grow more soybeans. Soybeans have not been competitive with program crops (feed grains, wheat, and Upland cotton) since the mid-1980's because of their high target prices and deficiency payments and acreage base restrictions that discourage the movement of land out of program crops. The 10-25 provision of the Disaster Assistance Act of 1988, which allows producers to plant 10-25 percent of their permitted program crop acres in soybeans in 1989, should encourage soybean production. The Secretary of Agriculture must operate the 10-25 program so that expected market prices will not fall below 115 percent of the 1988 loan rate for soybeans (i.e., not below \$5.49 per bushel). The Secretary has announced that 80 percent of the more than 3.5 million acres enrolled in the 10-25 signup will be allowed on permitted base acreage. Given the current market situation, program benefits for grains and Upland cotton are likely to be high enough to limit soybean plantings on program bases to considerably less acreage than allowed.

Lower wheat set-aside requirements will also encourage

more double-cropping of soybeans and wheat in 1989. Hence, soybean planting should rise by several million acres. But, only increased production incentives, such as increased producer returns or removal of commodity program restrictions, will increase the U.S. share of world production and exports. Marketing loans will not encourage more production when U.S. prices exceed the loan rate and therefore cannot help market soybeans abroad.

Are Foreign Investors Buying Agricultural Land?

"Foreign Investors 'Buy American'" is the gist of almost daily stories in the media. But the stories are not about foreigners buying products labeled "Made in the U.S.A." They are about foreigners investing in American assets—businesses, stocks and bonds, and real estate. These stories evoke varying responses among Americans, ranging from cries that foreign investors threaten national security to self-congratulation on the basic health of the American economy that lures those foreign investors.

Where does American agriculture stand in this evolving story? ERS has the answer, unlike the situation 10 years ago when Americans were concerned that Arabian petrodollars might be buying vast acreages of American agricultural land. The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act of 1978 (AFIDA), passed in response to that concern, requires foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to submit reports to the Secretary of Agriculture that detail, among other things, the size of their holdings. Based on these reports, ERS researcher Peter DeBraal (786-1425) prepares an annual report to the President and Congress on such investments.

DeBraal reports that, as of the end of 1987, foreigners reported owning 12.5 million acres, or slightly less than 1 percent, of the 1.3 billion acres of privately owned U.S. farm and timber land. Foreign investors from the United Kingdom, Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, Netherlands Antilles, Netherlands, and Switzerland own 72 percent of the foreign-held acres, while Japanese hold 150,000 acres, or slightly more than 1 percent of foreign-held acres. Arab investors? They never were much interested in U.S. agricultural land. They owned 22,000 acres in 1981, and that increased to only 67,000 acres by 1987.

AFIDA data reported by ERS indicate that, at least through 1987, foreign investors found assets other than U.S. agricultural land to be more attractive investments.

Fruit and Vegetable Harvested Acreage To Be Monitored

USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) has asked ERS to monitor fruit and vegetable harvested acreage in the United States in compliance with the "snapback provision" contained in the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement. ERS economist Shannon Hamm (786-1884) is developing a database to monitor changes in the harvested acreage of fruits and vegetables.

The "snapback provision" calls for monitoring daily import prices of specific fresh produce items. These prices are then compared with the individual commodity's respective 5-year average (after removing the highest and lowest values) for that month. If the observed price falls below 90 percent of this average value for 5 consecutive days and domestic acreage for that commodity is not above the average of the previous 5 years (excluding the

high and low values), then MFN (most-favored nation) tariffs can be invoked (snapped back) at the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture. Tariffs can be imposed for a maximum of 180 days but must be removed if the commodity price exceeds 90 percent of the 5-year monthly average for 5 consecutive working days. The Bureau of the Census is providing the price data through the U.S. Customs Service, and FAS is coordinating the monitoring.

Farm Size Classification Procedure Studied

Classifying a farm's size based on its value of production may be a more accurate indicator of farm output and size than the currently used classification procedure based on gross sales. Because sales class approaches do not account for changes in inventory or the effects of unusual events or the effects of changes in producers' practices, a farm with consistent year-to-year levels of production and input use may fall into different sales classes in successive years. For example, if inventory is held back, an otherwise large-scale farm could be classified into a much smaller sales class. Value-of-production measures seem to minimize the distortions such factors introduce into the picture of the farm sector provided to policymakers and businesses serving the sector.

In their report, *Alternate Measures of Farm Output to Classify Farms by Size* (TB-1749, Jan. 1989), ERS analysts Gregory Hanson (786-1807) and Mary Ahearn and Bernard Stanton (Cornell U.) examine six alternative concepts of farm size classification using data from the 1985 Farm Costs and Returns Survey. Of those considered, the analysts believe that the concept that uses the value of production or production expenses, whichever is larger, plus direct Government payments is the most accurate.

Personnel Notes

Crutchfield Is Appointed RTD Section Leader

Stephen Crutchfield has been appointed leader, Externalities Section, Soil and Water Branch, Resources and Technology Division.



C. RILEY

Crutchfield joined ERS in the Externalities Section in 1986 and has conducted extensive research on water quality issues related to agriculture.

During 1980-86, Crutchfield was an assistant professor of resource economics at the U. of Rhode Island, where his work focused especially on marine resource economics.

Crutchfield has a B.A. in economics and history from the U. of Washington and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in economics from Yale U. His research on water quality, environmental and marine resource economics, and applied demand analysis has been published extensively in resource and agricultural journals.

Uri Is New Section Leader in RTD

Noel Uri was recently named leader, Program and Policy Analysis Section, Resource



Policy Branch, Resources and Technology Division. Uri came to ERS in 1987

from the Federal Trade Commission. Prior to his FTC work, Uri was an economist in the Dept. of Energy, the Federal Energy Administration, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. His career also has included teaching positions in economics at the U. of Illinois, George Mason U., and Catholic U. of America.

Uri has an A.B. in math and an M.A. in economics from San Diego State College and a Ph.D. in economics from the U. of Illinois. His work has been published in economics and other journals worldwide, and he has written four books, including *Dimensions of Energy Economics* and *Energy Demand and Conservation in the United States*, and coauthored three books, including *Managerial Economics*.

In general, value-of-production approaches reduce the number of farms in the largest and smallest categories and increase the midsized classes. These measures also suggest that the competitive position of midsized farms may be stronger than previously inferred.

The analysts plan to extend their research to determine whether value-of-production procedures consistently yield results that are significantly different from those produced by sales-class procedures over several years of data. They also will explore a value-added classification concept.

ERS Alumni News

[We invite ERS alumni to write to us at the address on page 2 about what they or other alumni are doing, where they are living, etc.]

ERS retiree **Max Tharp** died Mar. 13 in Falls Church, Va. • and ERS retiree **Charles Wittmann** died Mar. 11 in Alexandria, Va.

Highlights of Staff Activities

Agriculture and Rural Economy Division

Mary Ahearn, David Banker, Charles Barnard, Robert Dismukes, Duane Hacklander, Gregory Hanson, James Johnson, Robert McElroy, Mitchell Morehart, and Michael Salassi taught sessions at the Farm Costs and Returns Survey Regional Training Schools in Clearwater Beach, Fla., and Reno, Nev. • David Harrington and Steven Koenig participated in a Farm Financial Standards Task Force meeting on developing a common farm income statement and balance sheet, in St. Louis, Mo. • Alexander Majchrowicz was interviewed by USDA News and the Brownfield Radio Network on changes in employment earnings in nonmetro industries • James Mikesell presented an overview of ERS research at a WRC-63 meeting on rural credit systems of the West, in Tempe, Ariz. • Victor Oliveira discussed measuring employment at a Dept. of Labor seminar on Analysis of Labor Statistics for Policy Formulation in the Human Resources Sector • Norman Reld presented a paper, "Rural Areas in the 1980s: Prologue to the 21st Century" at an Appalachian Educational Laboratory meeting • Gerald Schluter discussed extended models and social accounting matrices at a Construction and Use of Regional Input-Output Models Conference in Morgantown, W. Va. • Schluter also presented a paper, "Agricultural Sector in Relation to the National Economy" at the National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy, Resources for the Future • and Stephen Tokarick presented a paper, "Endogenous Tariff Formation in a Computable General Equilibrium Model" at an Interagency Economywide Modeling Working Group.

Agriculture and Trade Analysis Division

Harry Baumes was a session panelist and session moderator at an Agribusiness Marketing Conference, in San Antonio, Tex. • William Coyle participated in a Brookings Institution executive leadership seminar on economic restructuring in East Asia • Albert Evans and Carol Goodloe discussed the estimation of tariff equivalents of border measures for Korea and Canada with U.S. International Trade Commission analysts • Goodloe discussed the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement with Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute staff • Goodloe also gave a presentation on Canadian agriculture at an Alabama Soybean Association meeting in Huntsville, Ala. • Christlan Foster was interviewed by a Cedar Rapids, Iowa, television station on prospects for agricultural reform in the Soviet Union and the outlook for U.S. trade • Foster also was interviewed by RFD Satellite TV on prospects for Soviet grain production and trade • Walter Gardiner and Mary Normille provided information on near- and long-term prospects for U.S. soybean exports to the European Community to *Feedstuffs* magazine • George Gardner provided the U.S. Agency for International Development mission in Cairo, Egypt, with background papers on agricultural price policy reforms in developing nations • Kenneth Gray and Kathryn Zelmetz discussed current developments in Soviet agriculture with U.S. Department of State and Defense Intelligence Agency staff • Gray, Fred Crook, and Francis Tuan discussed Soviet and Chinese agriculture with U. of Chicago staff • Robert House and Robert Reinsel presented a paper, "Programs to Support a Policy of Adjustment Assistance" at an NCR-151 seminar on Surplus Capacity and Resource Adjustment in

Agriculture, in St. Louis, Mo. • Reinsel also presented a seminar on support for a policy of adjustment assistance in U.S. agriculture at Arizona State U. • David Kelch participated in a European Agricultural Economics Society conference on the implications of 1992 for EC agriculture, in London, UK • Michael Kurtzig provided information on Turkey's barley and corn production in view of the drought in southern Europe to Louis Dreyfus Co. staff • Kurtzig, John Parker, and Nancy Cochran briefed a Wheat Associates mission group prior to its visits to U.S. wheat markets in Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia • Kurtzig, Patricia Scheld, Shahla Shapouri, and Kelley White briefed a Soviet delegation on U.S.-Soviet cooperation in Africa • Suchada Langley presented a paper, "Effects of Exchange Rates and Trade Policy on U.S. Agricultural Trade" at an Agribusiness Marketing Conference in San Antonio, Tex. • Carl Mabbs-Zeno discussed ERS cooperative research with Howard U. staff • Gene Mathla and Patricia Scheld discussed operation and management of ERS databases with staff from Egypt's Ministry of Agriculture in Cairo • Mathew Shane and Harry Baumes met with staff from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service, and the Council of Economic Advisers to prepare a response to the planned Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development study on decoupling farm programs from production decisions • and Gary Vocke organized a session on the impact of foreign aid on U.S. agriculture at an American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in San Francisco, Calif.

Commodity Economics Division

Annette Clauson and Warren Jessee taught sessions at the Farm Costs and Returns

Survey Regional Training Schools in Clearwater Beach, Fla., and Reno, Nev. • **Bradley Crowder, Samuel Evans, Edward Glade, Scott Sanford, Robert Skinner, Harold Stults, and Carol Whitton** participated in a cotton economics and marketing conference in Nashville, Tenn. • **Richard Fallert, Carolyn Leibrand, Donald Blayney, and Ann Fleming** hosted the North Central and Northeast Regional Dairy Research Committees for a research planning meeting • **Gregory Gajewski** is the new editor of ERS's *Agricultural Outlook* magazine • **John Lawler** participated in an American Sheep Producers Council meeting in Las Vegas, Nev. • **Mack Leath, William Lin, and Stephanie Mercier** participated in an NC-151 regional research committee meeting on grain quality, in St. Louis, Mo. • **Leath** is also the NC-151 committee chairman for 1988/89 • **Leath** also represented ERS at an NCR-156 regional committee meeting on expert systems in agriculture, in Urbana, Ill. • **Harold Linstrom** discussed the export potential for Brazilian fresh and processed fruit and vegetable products with researchers from the João Pinheiro Foundation in Belo Horizonte, Brazil • **Janet Livezey** presented USDA's rice outlook at a Rice Outlook Conference in Monroe, La. • **Patrick O'Brien** presented a paper on the status of world agriculture at a World Bank agricultural symposium • **O'Brien** also represented USDA and presented a paper on macroeconomics and commodity market prospects at the Australian Agricultural Outlook Conference in Canberra • **Nicholas Powers, James Blaylock, Lester Myers, and Daniel Putler** participated in an NEC-63-sponsored conference on the impact of farmer-sponsored generic and promotional activities on food demand, in Orlando, Fla. • **Nelli Schaller** presented a paper, "Mainstreaming Low-Input Agriculture," at a conference sponsored by the Soil and

Water Conservation Society, USDA, and EPA in Omaha, Nebr. • **James Schaub** discussed methods for forecasting domestic food use of peanuts with the National Peanut Council Statistical Task Force • **Ronald Trostle** presented testimony on world food production to a House Subcommittee on Natural Resources, Agriculture Research and Environment • and **Bruce Wendland** presented a paper, "Estimating U.S. Sunflower Yields with the Use of North Dakota Weather Variables" at a National Sunflower Association Research Forum in Fargo, N. Dak.

Resources and Technology Division

Joseph Barse joined 40 other researchers to review progress on a 5-year project to develop and test alternative, primarily nonchemical methods to control grasshoppers on rangeland, in Boise, Idaho • **Stan Daberkow** discussed current pesticide issues, including ground water contamination and effects of low-input sustainable agriculture, at a Chemical Producers and Distributors Association conference • **David Ervin** represents ERS on the National Conservation Review Group, which is counseling USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service on State-proposed changes in eligible practices for national conservation programs • **Noel Gollehon** served on a panel to evaluate economic research proposals submitted for funding under the Water Resources Research Grants Program of the U.S. Geological Survey • **Ralph Helmlich** presented a seminar on the extent and characteristics of wetlands converted to cropland, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency staff • **Michael Moore** and **Donald Negri** met with New Mexico State U. economists on their joint project to evaluate implications of reduced water supplies in the West for irrigated

crop production and land use • **Merritt Padgett** taught sessions at the Farm Costs and Returns Survey Regional Training Schools in Clearwater Beach, Fla., and Reno, Nev. • **John Reilly** is representing ERS on a variety of USDA, interagency, and intergovernmental committees that are assessing global climate change and developing strategies for addressing the issue • **John Schaub** represents ERS on the Interagency Pest Management Task Force, which will be preparing semiannual reports on critical pest and pest management issues for the House Committee on Appropriations • **Schaub** also chaired USDA's Agricultural Research Service panel on reviewing the effectiveness of ARS's pesticide assessment laboratory • **John Sutton** presented a paper on policy reform at an NCR-151 Symposium on Surplus Capacity and Resource Adjustment in U.S. Agriculture, in St. Louis, Mo. • and **Harry Vroomen** briefed a journalist from the People's Republic of China on the U.S. fertilizer industry.

Office of the Administrator

John Lee addressed a National Pasta Association meeting in Tuscon, Ariz., and presented a paper at a Washington, D.C., Conference on Low-Input Agriculture • **Lee** also made a presentation before the National Commission on Agricultural Policy and Rural Development, and helped Keith Collins (Economic Analysis Staff, USDA) conduct a 4-week course on agricultural policy for the staff of USDA's Office of Information • **Bob Robinson** participated in an Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station Task Force meeting at Auburn U. • and **Robinson** also participated in USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service data users conference in Orlando, Fla.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE, ROOM 1212
1301 NEW YORK AVENUE NORTHWEST
WASHINGTON, DC 20005-4788

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